

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the present amendment and following discussion, is respectfully requested.

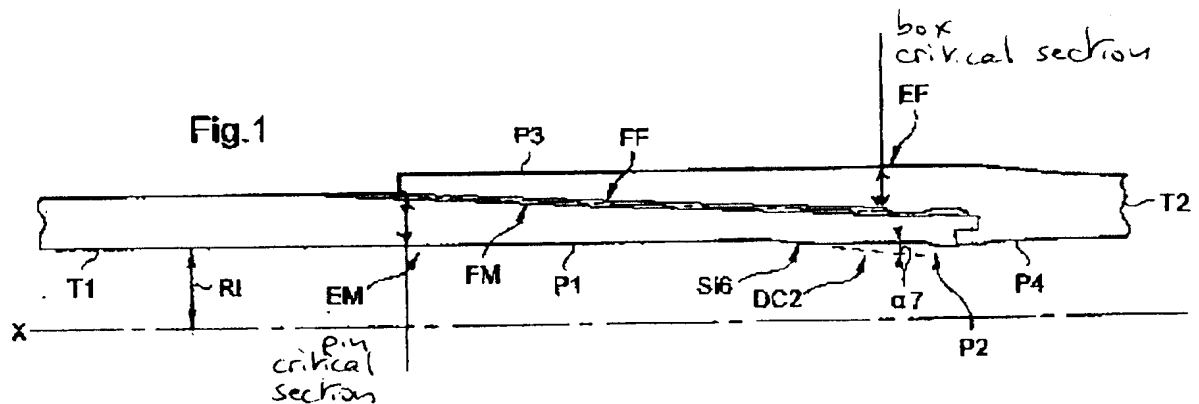
Claims 1-39 are pending. Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 16, 17, 27, 30, 31, and 37 are amended. Support for the amendment to Claim 1 can be found in numbered paragraph [0075] of the published application, for example. Support for the amendments to Claims 16 and 31 can be found in the published application in numbered paragraph [0025], which defines a “common portion of a tube.” Further support can be found in numbered paragraph [0070] of the published application, which defines the “efficiency of the connection (or of the joint).” Support for the remaining amendments is self-evident. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 16, 17, 27, 30, 31, and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite. Claims 1-10, 12-19, 26, and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Verger et al. (WO 03/060370, herein “Verger”).¹ Claims 11, 22, 27, 28, and 37-39 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Verger. Claims 20, 21, 30, and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Verger in view of Metcalf et al. (WO 98/42947, herein “Metcalf”). Claims 23 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Verger in view of Klementich (U.S. Patent No. 5,462,315). Claim 25 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Verger in view of Yamamoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,419,595, herein “Yamamoto”).

At the outset, Applicants note with appreciation the courtesy of a personal interview granted by Primary Examiner James Hewitt. In combination with the Interview Summary provided by Primary Examiner Hewitt, the substance of the personal interview is substantially summarized below in accordance with MPEP § 713.04.

¹ The outstanding Office Action refers to U.S. Patent Pub. 2005/0172472 for a translation of Verger.

Regarding the rejections of Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 16, 17, 27, 30, 31, and 37, as discussed during the personal interview, these claims are amended to clarify the features recited therein. For example, Claims 16 and 31 are amended to delete reference to the common portion of the tubes and the efficiency of the joint. Regarding the "critical sections" recited in these claims, the critical sections are the maximum thickness of either the male or female threaded areas, taken at the last engaged thread on either the left or the right end of the made up threaded connection.² An annotated copy of Fig. 1 is provided below for clarification. The critical section on the male member is the "pin" critical section. The critical section on the female member is the "box" critical section. Thus, there are two critical sections shown.



Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 16, 17, 27, 30, 31, and 37 are not indefinite.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 1-10, 12-19, 26, and 29 as anticipated by Verger, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response.

Amended independent Claim 1 recites, in part:

- iv) a third inner surface extending between said fourth axial abutment surface and said female thread and defining with said second outer surface and said fourth abutment surface an annular recess corresponding to said first lip,
wherein said first tubular element comprises a selected local annular added thickness in the region of a fourth inner

² This term in the art is also sometimes phrased as a "critical area." For example, U.S. Pat. Pub. 2001/0001219 defines the critical areas in paragraphs [0013] and [0014].

surface extending the second abutment surface and the local annular added thickness decreases in thickness in an axial direction extending toward the male thread of the first tubular element,

wherein said second tubular element comprises, at a selected location of said third inner surface, an inner annular groove

that faces, in a radial direction, said first outer surface and

that lies in the same axial region as the local annular added thickness, and

wherein said first and second tubular elements are shaped in such a way that said first lip is accommodated in said annular recess.

Thus, the local annular added thickness decreases in thickness in an axial direction extending toward the male thread of the first tubular element. One non-limiting example of the above-noted arrangement can be found in Fig. 5 with reference to (P2) and (SA1), for example.

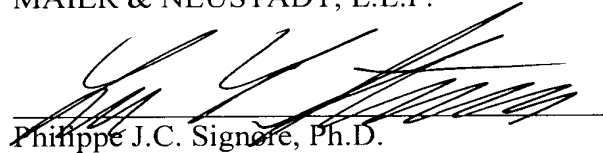
As discussed during the personal interview, Verger describes a cylindrical inner diameter on the male portion (1), and this inner diameter does not change as recited in amended independent Claim 1. Accordingly, as discussed during the personal interview, amended independent Claim 1 and the claims depending therefrom patentably distinguish over Verger. None of the remaining references remedies the deficiency noted above regarding Verger, and a person of ordinary skill in the art would have had no apparent reason, at the time the invention recited in Claim 1 was made, to modify Verger to include the above-noted feature. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent Claim 1 and the claims depending therefrom patentably distinguish over any reasonable combination of the cited references.

Should Primary Examiner Hewitt deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, he is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative via telephone.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philippe J.C. Signore', is written over a horizontal line.

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